

Stirring Incident From the Drama
of Business Life in Which There
Is a Lesson for the Master Mind.

THEY CALL IT RUIN

BY
RICHARD WASHBURN CHILD.

HE was ruined. No one else knew it yet. He knew it. His business had been to take "sick pups" among small industrial plants and with no training as an engineer and his genius for accounting and his judgment of men, he had set one company after another on its feet. As things went in the world, he had made himself rich. He believed he had proved himself able to evade any failure, any trap, any exception to the long list of successes which had made the securities issued by him sell merely because his name was behind them.

Well, that was what had done for him—that reputation. He had told his friends he could take over this Polar Forge Metallurgical Company and carry it until it would be able to supply an eager demand of the Detroit automobile manufacturers.

Nasty conventional phrase which goes running through a man's head in melodramatic repetitions: "I am ruined! I am ruined!" No use think much now of beginning life all over again. Success slipped away at the approach of old age when there is no real rebuilding of those houses of cards blown down. His name a byword among the houses dealing in this kind of securities! Gossip at the club! Derision or pity—disgusting pity!

He must go home. This was Saturday night. No dining out—thank heaven! But the family. The grave faces—concealed grief, terror, disappointment, disillusion. There was Alice—dear Alice, with whom he had loved and laughed and quarreled all these years. She would say: "Don't worry, John." She had always said that in the past. She would pull her tiny handkerchief through her fingers, now slightly wrinkled, and try to laugh. But when she knew that the house had gone too—what then? And her place—her place in a comfortable social life. She had been so fine. What would she say now—at ruin? He had failed her at the last. In reality she would smile and say: "Don't worry, John." But the vision he saw of her stricken face represented, not to him, what would have been in her heart.

HE could hear his stenographer faintly. She knew. She was telephoning some one there in the sound-proof booth. He had seen her red-tipped fingers would get another job. Cold woman! Touched by seeing him sink. But a quick recovery! Depend upon it. He had thought of Cynthia, his oldest daughter, somehow the dearest. He had known that he would have to let her go at last. She was twenty-one now. Some good, untarnished boy would take her, and he would be happy against that. He was picturing all the compensations of losing her and con-juring up, in advance, the days he would spend occasionally with the new family with their children coming on like a new cycle of his own sex expression.

He remembered talking to Alice as they had come home from the Osbornes through a spring night full of the scents of hedges and sleeping gardens. "I've got a prize, my girl," he had told her.

A prize? Everything had gone wrong. Polar Forge had been like a huge ugly mouth, ever hungry, ever calling for more. He shoveled wealth into it. He borrowed on his own paper.

Six months more would have seen the company on its feet. Now he held a little piece of crumpled paper in his hand—an example of arithmetic. His creditors had asked in peremptory fashion for the answer to that problem, and the answer was that he was ruined!

There was a pause before any one of them greeted him. For a moment he wondered if they could know the blow which had fallen on them. Impossible. No one knew, except himself, the truth.

"Hello, dad," his son said. "How goes it?"

"Pretty well," he replied. He did not like the boy's greeting. It was not more than a cheerful salutation of a stranger, and an independent one. He recalled, suddenly, that since the boy had gone to college a curious indefinable barrier had come up between them. He wondered if Polar Forge had been responsible for that too.

"Everybody's a gloom," said his son in a whining voice quite unnatural. "Little sis, there, has a secret sorrow."

"What's her name," their mother said sharply to Ted.

"Well, I'm not a gloom," Cynthia asserted, snatching together the pages of her book and jumping up. "I'm the happy young woman, the sunshine of the upper East Side!" She laughed, and then she said: "I don't know what has got into Cynthia," Mrs. Bertillon said. "She is positively queer."

"I think I know," Ted said. "Now what," asked Cynthia. "You've been smoking hashish!" The younger Alice began to cough, and this cough irritated her father; he turned, stared at her as a man suddenly called from sleep.

"Coughs," he said, "hang on like that need a doctor. He said to his wife: 'I know it,' he said Carmichael. 'But you never have mentioned it since. You go about like a man with a dream, and can't tell what you want.'"

The golden-haired daughter was bending over the desk. Bertillon thought he saw her body shaken by a gust of terror.

The door leading to the dining room were rolled apart, and the butler's low voice came into the family circle with "Madame est servie."

"Go ahead, the rest of you," Bertillon said. "I want to ask Alice something. Go ahead, Ted, Cynthia, and you, dear."

He touched his wife's arm and fancied that she drew away from him nervously.

"Yes, dad."

She did not look up. He went to her and put his hands upon the young shoulders. A great fear crept coldly into him. She was so thin, so frail. His little Alice!

"I want you to go and see Dr. Carmichael."

"I've been," the low words were like a judge's sentence. "He said to tell you and mother."

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"WELL, ALICE ROSE; IF IT'S ANY COMFORT TO YOU TO KNOW IT, JOHN, THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF MEN WHO DO JUST AS YOU HAVE BEEN DOING."

Her brother had said: "Cynthia is enthused about Millsapough."

It had, as Cynthia had shown, deserved no answer, or else a great deal of answer.

"Great Scott! Millsapough!" Suddenly Bertillon realized that Cynthia was over twenty-one. There had never been any talk of her marriage. She—his dearest, somehow—still appeared to him as the little girl he had known so long. He could not conceive of her as having any intimacy with Millsapough. Millsapough! An old beau, from whom the bloom had all gone—a master of flirtations.

Suddenly Bertillon remembered a passing remark at the club. It came back to him like an echo. He could hear Newbold saying as Millsapough passed: "There goes the old boy. He says he has come to real love at last. Found his renewed youth in a young untouched soul—debutante! My stars!"

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just as he was leaving the office. He had intended to read it on the way uptown. He was so busy these days—these days which had led to ruin.

His son sat with lowered head.

"Well, what is it, Ted, my boy?" his father asked.

"Mother knows." The voice was trembling. Ted loved his mother; he bent his head lower.

Bertillon turned toward his wife. How white her face had suddenly grown! What pain was in her eyes returning blankly his stare of silent inquiry!

"It is as bad as it can be," she said. Then, realizing that their youngest daughter was still present, she said: "Alice."

"What is it, mother?"

"You took no dessert. Aren't you hungry?"

"No," she was coughing again—a paroxysm. She bent over in distress. Bertillon, frightened, confused, stared at her. He had visions of some dreadful climax.

"Well, if you are not hungry, Alice, I wish you would find Cynthia and comfort her," Mrs. Bertillon begged.

"Really, I never knew such chaos!" The girl seemed tired and listless as she disappeared.

Bertillon was still looking into the eyes of his wife. They were hard and reproachful—a look he had never seen before.

"Well, if you are not ill, are you?" asked his father.

"No."

"In trouble with the college?"

"No."

"That wouldn't be anything," the mother explained.

Bertillon could not suppress an exclamation of despair. "A matter of honor?"

Ted turned his face toward his father. "Did you read my letter?"

"No."

"I thought not."

"I could have saved you, my boy."

His son gave forth a cry of injury almost animal in its fierceness. He flung his napkin down, upsetting his glass of water. "Well, I won't come to you again. For the sake of my sisters I'll go away. I'll change my name. They can't force me into doing what I don't want to do. And what do I care for the newspapers? I'm through!"

He rushed blindly toward the portieres and was gone. Ted had gone

the way of the self-indulgent coward. Something to live down? Ted must be made to face it.

Bertillon jumped up.

"Don't make fools of all of us!" his wife cautioned in a cold, merciless voice. "Have some regard for the servants. Ted won't leave tonight. 'Am I always to be the one who has to stand the brunt of everything'?"

"No, no—of course not!"

"He sat down again; he was confused."

"Well, said she harshly. 'I suppose you've some complaint of your own.'"

"No—no," he answered. "Nothing to tell now."

"Well, this is the first time in months you haven't had some complaint or criticism, or—"

He winced. "Business—"

"Oh, business! Business! So that's the trouble again. As if business was an excuse for your being the kind of father—and husband—you've been! Business. I wish you'd never had a business."

HE was stunned. He had never realized. He wondered how much any hard-pressed man, driving along headlong with ambition's runaway horses, ever realizes. Yes, this was ruin. This was ruin, indeed!

He stretched his hands toward her. He felt the desperate need of her. It was that need which calls to a woman to be friend and sister, mother and mate, all in one. Baffled and defeated, his whole being yearned for her, for the touch of her hand, for a word from her lips.

"Alice!" he cried again desperately. That dead, cold look in her eyes had not changed. "What is it?" she asked wearily. "You're not going to be sentimental, I hope."

She had never spoken to him like that before. Why, she was the one who had been with him through all the happy struggle. He had never come to her in vain. He had always been willing to lay every bit of his effort and of himself at her feet. It was impossible that she did not love him. It was impossible that—even after those long months (was it years?) when, to be sure, he had not remembered often how much he loved her and seldom showed it—love could suddenly disappear like this. Could its wells have dried and its first have gone out when his back had too often

turned upon it? Now he hungered and thirsted for it.

But there was no love in her eyes; it had gone. "None of this would have happened, my dear, if you had paid the slightest attention to us," she said. "The trouble with the family is that you went your own separate way." She shrugged her shoulders.

there been so long a stretch of accepting life as if life were a kind of dream—as if the children were a kind of lay figures for a father's perfunctory assumption of his own love for them, as if his wife were a dress form upon whose waxen forehead and waxen cheeks one occasionally laid down a kiss and mumbled a conven-

She put her arms about his neck. "What do we care?" she asked.

Youth. New beginnings. The contest! Old loyalties. Old loves! Security! Safety! Health!

He reached out to touch life, to take it into his enfolding arms.

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Goldfish Farmers.

(Continued from Fifth Page.)

hopes that they will golden out the following summers. Generally, this practice is unprofitable.

THE vicissitudes of gold fish farming are many and feature destruction and despoliation by snakes, turtles, cranes, chicken hawks, a species of owl, kingfishers and other devouring birds and reptiles. Ground hogs, muskrats and crayfish tunnel and undermine the banks of the ponds and effect small breaks, which in time become so large that the water may all drain away. To control such depredations, many operators locate their ponds close to their dwellings and farm buildings so that those about the house may watch the artificial pools and protect the fish. Where conditions demand the remote location of ponds, watchmen armed with shotguns patrol the banks daily. They repair or plug up all holes that appear in the walls of the ponds and shoot all bird enemies of the fish and destroy snakes.

Bullfrogs are obnoxious in fish ponds as they harbor snakes and obstruct the efficient harvest of the gold fish. When the water is drained away, the fish often get caught in the dense growth of "cat tails" and die. All over tall and matted growth of vegetation or weeds has to be removed from the fish ponds. There are certain varieties of moss that cause trouble in harvesting the fish and these have to be plowed under or otherwise destroyed when the ponds are dry.

The brood fish spawn for from four to eight weeks after they are set out in the spring of the year. The young fish as they hatch and begin to develop are very dark colored and it is only as they grow under the most favorable conditions that their coats change to the desirable golden shades. Four months after incubation, the young of gold fish are ready for market. There are three trade classifications for these fish. The small class includes specimens that range from one to two inches in size, the mediums measure two to three inches, while the large range from three to four inches in length. All the fish over four inches are retained as brood fish if they are satisfactory for that purpose.

In the rough and mountainous sections of Frederick county gold fish farming is jeopardized by another serious hazard—freshets and floods may surge from the crag tops, wash the gold fish ponds away, and carry away the valuable fish. In very muddy flood water gold fish become sluggish. This disposition prevents them from volitionally venturing far from their home pools unless they are swept away by strong currents. These fish will not thrive in water that is very cold or where they are exposed to swift currents. They color best in the rather stagnant, slow-moving waters of the artificial ponds which range from three to three and one-half feet in depth.

THE gold fishes are marketed from Frederick county in express cars. Usually 140 to 150 carloads of these curious aquatic treasures are shipped annually to New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Toledo, Cincinnati and Burlington, Iowa, which are the most important marketing centers of the industry. Usually the producers sell the fish for \$15 to \$45 a thousand, depending on their size and coloring. Fish dealers receive from 10 cents to \$1 a piece. Brood fishes commonly are sold for 10 to 25 cents a head. Aside from the gold-fish enterprise of Frederick county, there are but half a dozen of these unusual farms in the United States. One each in the states of Iowa, Ohio and several in the neighborhood of Grassy Forks, Ind.

The ponds are easily drained and the fish captured during midautumn. A small exit, about eight inches square, leads from each pond to a special draw box, whence the captive waterborne creatures are hoisted on a float, a contraption with a wooden bottom and wire mesh top and sides. The water flows through this box, while the fish stick. They are removed to special fish cans and carried to the fish house. The fish house is equipped with a large table covered with checked oilcloth, each of the checks being exactly one inch square. First, the fish are dumped on the sorting table, so that all the tadpoles, lizards and dark-colored specimens might be removed. Then the gold fish are sorted and graded as to size and counted. The brood fishes being removed. The fishes of the different sizes are placed in special ten-gallon fish cans partly full of water. About 200 of these cans constitute a carload. Dependent on the size of the gold fish, as a rule, there are anywhere from 155,000 to 200,000 more fish in the carload lot.

About five acres of fish ponds in Frederick county are devoted to the commercial production of fantails and Japanese fishes—ornamental varieties that are raised and marketed in the same manner as the gold fish. These are not so healthy as the gold fish and as a result the profits from their production are much lower.

Calling It Square.

From the Chicago Tribune.

She had arrived at the little station in Vermont on a cold, stormy night, and had hired an old man to drive her to her friend's farm, up among the hills. The roads were in bad condition from the storm and the ride was altogether an uncomfortable one.

"How much do I owe you?" she asked on arriving at her destination.

"Well, ma'am," said the old man, "my regular price is a dollar, but seeing as it's such a bad night and the going's so terrible, I'll call it 75 cents."